

STATE OF MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE MEETING MINUTES

Franklin Inn 1070 East Huron Bad Axe, Michigan 48413
June 10-11, 1997

PRESENT

Norman R. Veliquette, Chairperson
Douglas E. Darling, Vice Chairperson
Jordan B. Tatter, Secretary
Deanna Stamp
Director Dan Wyant
Michigan Department of Agriculture Staff

ABSENT

Shirley A. Skogman

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

Gary Krug, Michigan Corn Marketing Committee, Huron County Commission
Charles F. Kline, Northern Michigan Fairs and Racing Association
John T. Martin, Huron County Road Commission
Vern Rounds, Huron County Drain Commission
Mayhard Hogberg, Michigan State University
Fred L. Poston, Michigan State University
Janet Perry, Sanilac County Fair
Ron Nelson, Michigan Farm Bureau
Marvin J. Kociba, Huron County Road Commission
Kevin Kirk, Michigan Farm Bureau
Burt Keefer, Cooperative Elevator Company
Mike Keefer, Cooperative Elevator Company
Maurice Bushey, Huron County Road Commission
John Hunt, J. W. Hunt Trucking and Huron County Road Commission
Kay Clark, Farmer
Gilbert Clark, Farmer
John Foley
Steve Foley
Anthony Kreiner
James H. Reilly, Lapeer County, Burnside Township
Warren Bravn,. Huron County Farm Bureau
Diana Sensenig, Huron County Farm Bureau
Warren J. Krohn, Huron County Road Commission
Tim Goodrich, Michigan Farm Bureau

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chairperson Veliquette called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m., Tuesday, June 10, 1997. Prior to the meeting the Commission was on tour visiting the dairy farm of Elwood Kirkpatrick in Kinde, Michigan and the Cooperative Elevator in Pigeon, Michigan.

Chairperson Veliquette called the roll, noting all Commissioners were present except Commissioner Skogman.

Approval of Agenda

Agenda was approved as presented.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Tatter moved that the minutes of the May 6-7, 1997 meeting be approved. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Michigan Commission of Agriculture will be held in Kewadin and Traverse City, Michigan (near Elk Rapids) July 10-11, 1997. Dave Charney described the tentative agenda.

Approval of Commissioners' Per Diem and Travel

Commissioner Stamp moved to approve Commissioner Darling's June 12 and June 19 travel and to approve travel of all Commissioners June 23-27 for the 1997 Ag Expo. In addition, Commissioner Darling was approved to travel to Washington, D.C. on June 12 to testify before the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) regarding the Chicago Board of Trades proposed changes of the delivery system, specifically regarding the Port of Toledo. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Commission Resolutions

Commissioner Tatter moved to approve the resolutions honoring four MDA employees who are retiring with the Commissioners' appreciation for their dedication and service to the state and to the Commission. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Darling reported that crops are slow to emerge this spring as planting is not quite completed and some replanting is needed due to heavy rainfall during May and June. He attended a meeting organized by the County Farm Bureau, County Corn Growers and Cooperative Extension regarding the Chicago Board of Trades proposed changes. Eighty-five to ninety farmers in attendance wrote letters expressing their concerns. Commissioner Darling will be testifying before the Commodity Futures Trading Commission on June 19 in Washington, D.C. During today's tour, he spoke with staff at the Pigeon Cooperative Elevator regarding concerns and expected impact.

Commissioner Darling commended MDA for the recent aquaculture event and the large amount of positive media coverage it received. He also noted that he recently read in the Detroit News that the Chrysler Corporation plans to sell more than 170,000 mini-vans powered by ethanol beginning in 1998, while the Ford Motor Company has unveiled plans to build 250,000 Ranger pickup trucks or E-85 cars powered by ethanol by early next decade. This is very good news for the corn industry.

Commissioner Veliquette reported that this is latest-ever cherry crop. There is potential for a large crop, which will test the new cherry federal market order's ability to regulate supply. The new coop, CherrCo, Inc., did not meet their membership goal by the due date; therefore, everyone withdrew with the proviso that if it was possible to get close to the membership goal in the near future, they would re-enroll. It does appear that the membership goal will be reached. This will be a revolutionary development in the cherry industry, parallel to the consolidations going on among other commodities.

Commissioner Veliquette noted from the Director's Report how various divisions are handling the retirements and re-organization. He further commented about the prospect of a new 1000-acre cranberry farm as reported by the Office of Agriculture Development. It's a fascinating time to be associated with this department.

Commissioner Stamp welcomed everyone to the Thumb Area. Corn planting is about two weeks later than normal; however, sugar beets, soy beans and dry beans are on schedule. Sugar beets in particular seem to be doing very well. Many farmers are concerned about how the alfalfa crop wintered and whether there may be feed shortages throughout the year. The wheat crop looks great, perhaps a bumper crop. Milk prices have been steadily declining over the past few months, but that situation is expected to take care of itself as time goes on. Four major milk coops in the nation are considering a merger and if that happens, the majority of the nation's milk will be under one marketing agency.

Commissioner Tatter reported fruit crop blossom periods are 10 to fourteen days later than normal. Depending on summer temperatures, this may mean maturity problems for fall-harvested crops which could impact migrant labor and labor availability for late season crops.

Commissioner Tatter attended the annual meetings of the International Association of Refrigerated Warehouses and the Refrigeration Research and Education Foundation in Barcelona, Spain. More than 500 members and guests attended from over 20 nations. Dr. Gordon Guyer presented a paper, co-authored by MDA employee Robin Rosenbaum, concerning the international affects of recent changes to U.S. pesticide use laws that apply to "so-called" minor crops. Those changes also will impact foreign producers and processors that target the U.S. market.

Commissioner Tatter attended a surprise retirement party for Jean Valley, participated in the Michigan Economic and Environmental Roundtable bimonthly meeting that continues to focus on land use, and attended the Southwest Michigan meeting regarding the proposed new

marketing cooperative, CherrCo, Inc. Although this meeting received only minimal attendance,

this unique cooperative effort to strengthen the tart cherry industry must be lead by Michigan-based participants.

Commissioner Tatter inquired about availability of data by MDA, Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service, or MSU regarding ownership types of Michigan farms, particularly "corporate farms." This data would be used in policy formation.

He has learned that Michigan's Renaissance Zone incentives are more attractive than those offered by neighboring states; thus the real competition to redevelop may be more internal than external to Michigan.

Director's Report

Due to Jann Ryan-Baugh's retirement, Stewart Freeman, Assistant Attorney General, has temporarily been assigned to assist with legal matters. A permanent assignment will be made as soon as possible

Fifty-six of 512 MDA employees took advantage of the recent early retirement opportunity. We continue to look at the impact of those retirements. A plan is in place and operating, but there are concerns about field inspections, particularly for nurseries and dairies. We are moving rapidly to fill positions and our primary focus will continue to be on food safety, strengthening the family farm, and pollution prevention.

MDA and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) are pilot agencies for the new Customer Service Academy. MDA employees will receive appropriate training within the next six months. This is the result of a recommendation of the Secchia Commission of which Commissioner Tatter was a member.

Senator George McManus and Doug Roberts, Director of the Michigan Department of Treasury, met to discuss the single business tax. There is a true commitment to reach a favorable solution which does not discourage business in Michigan. Doug Roberts will be meeting with the new Revenue Commission. Commissioner Tatter requests that notification of a positive outcome be sent to the same mailing list that initiated the incident.

Rich Czuba, Director of Travel Michigan, continues to be very supportive of agriculture tourism as indicated by the development of an agricultural focus at the I-94 Welcome Center in New Buffalo and the partnership being formed between MDA and Travel Michigan for the agriculture tourism conference planned for this fall. Farm markets and ag tourism continue to be a part of their Michigan promotional packages.

Mr. Wyant reported on the productive meeting held with Larry Leach, President, Michigan Association of Conservations Districts to discuss legislative changes to the soil conservation district law.

MDA appreciates the Commission's approval of Commissioner Darling's travel to testify before the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). He will represent the Governor, the Michigan Commission of Agriculture, the Michigan Department of Agriculture, as well as himself as a producer, all of which are impacted by the proposal of The Chicago Board of Trade to close Toledo as a delivery point. Congressman Nick Smith and Commissioner Darling will be

the only two people from Michigan allowed to testify.

Mr. Wyant distributed an article regarding a new deer management policy recently adopted by the Natural Resources Commission. He also distributed a recent Detroit News article written by David Littman regarding land use and the "Build Michigan II" report in advance of tomorrow's discussion of the Governor's road initiative.

Mr. Wyant referred to a recent letter received by Commissioner Tatter from former DNR director, Rollie Harmes. Mr. Harmes commended Wayne Whitman and his outstanding work with the Right to Farm Program and the resolution of many difficult environmental and nuisance issues.

MDA has agreed to assist potato growers who participate in the potato diversion program offered by USDA. Charges for inspectors' travel time and mileage will be waived to participating farmers.

There is continued interest in pollution prevention strategies for the state of Michigan. Mr. Wyant has attended two national and one regional EPA meetings considering a more aggressive enforcement at large livestock facilities referred to as the CAFO (Confined Animal Feeding Operations). Michigan is the only Great Lakes state not requiring a permit for large livestock feeding operations. Michigan successfully uses the Right to Farm Program to respond to complaints and environmental problems. We need to closely monitor the future of this issue to ensure policies are in place to solve these problems, rather than have a federal agency determine those policies. This subject will be fully discussed at a later Commission meeting.

Legislative Report

Vicki Pontz-Teachout reported that HB 4239 has been signed into law by the Governor as P.A. 007. A hearing of HB 4337, Drain Code, will be held on Thursday, June 12, with additional hearings held around the state during the summer. She referred to the lack of activity on the rBST bills, which is good news since Michigan already has labeling laws in effect. She is working closely with Representative Alley, Senator Still, Representative Wetters, the MDEQ, and other involved organizations regarding the three subdivision platting bills. Legislation regarding possession of exotic animals, wild animals and wolf hybrids should receive action by June 16.

The budget has passed the House Appropriations Committee and is pending activity by the House. It will then be sent to the Conference Committee for final resolution. MDA has identified several concerns between the House and Senate versions and will continue to work with both the Senate and Conference Committee members to ensure they are aware of these concerns. Because we have not had a full year of experience, it is difficult to project the amount of simulcast revenue we will receive. Since Muskegon Raceway has said they are unable to continue to operate, Nelson Westrin is looking for another qualified operator. Simulcasting would be illegal if racing is not or not expected to be conducted at the site where the simulcast is viewed.

Dr. Fred Poston, Dean, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, MSU

Dr. Poston urged the Commission to stay involved in land and water use issues as they interface between rural agricultural regions, urban areas and the environment. A National Food Safety and Toxicology Center is expected to open at MSU in the spring of 1998 to conduct research on food safety issues, which includes pathogens as they affect livestock and chemical and microbial contaminants. A national or international conference may kick off this activity. Dr. Poston has discussed with Director Wyant concerns about the prevention of pollution problems, specifically animal waste and confined animal operations. The Right to Farm Program has been successful in regulating and solving many of these problems, but we still need to determine appropriate technology to handle animal waste on "mega farms", particularly dairy and swine farms. MSU hopes to host the Second Annual Agricultural Summit in the spring of 1998 to address this issue and search for potential solutions. Director Wyant and Dr. Poston have identified staff to assist in the planning of this summit.

Project GREEN - Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs

Dr. Poston distributed a brochure describing Project GREEN, an initiative to address needs and concerns identified at the first Agricultural Summit. One major issue is the university's ability to respond in a comprehensive, rapid and integrated manner. Plant agriculture management programs must be available to increase profitability and to reduce environmental impact and food safety problems. There also must be value-added products processed from Michigan agricultural products. This initiative should include studies which help gain access to new markets across the world. Project GREEN also must develop strategies and support to cope with public policy issues in agriculture.

Public Comment

Charles Kline, Northern Michigan Fairs and Racing Association, advised that there will be one to six county fairs every week through September, with more than five million people attending. Mr. Kline expressed his pleasure that Director Wyant will be visiting more fairs this year and has established relations with the tourist council. Janet Perry, who serves on the Board of Directors of both the Croswell Fair and the Sandusky Fair and who is very active in 4-H and pleasure horses, was introduced. Commissioner Stamp has worked closely with Ms. Perry over the years and commended her for her work and dedication. Director Wyant advised that a company from St. Joseph County will be producing a promotional video that will highlight the history of Michigan county fairs. Julie Avery of the MSU Museum will be creating a major exhibit from some original promotional fair art recently discovered in a warehouse. There has been discussion about taking this exhibit on the road.

Recess and Reconvene

Chairperson Veliquette recessed the meeting at 6:50 p.m. June 10 and reconvened it at 8:30 a.m. June 11, 1997.

Representative Mike Green

Representative Green welcomed the Commission to the Thumb Area and shared statistics

confirming that the Thumb is the "Food Basket of Michigan."

Right to Farm Program

Dr. Maynard Hogberg discussed the annual review process for the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMP). Wayne Whitman reported that 1,149 complaints have been received over the past 10 years. Only eight of those complaints were referred to MDEQ because they could not be resolved by MDA staff meeting with the farmer. The reason so many complaints have been resolved without litigation is because this document works. We rely heavily on our partnerships with MSU Extension, USDA at the county level, and the assistance received from local agencies to resolve these complaints. There have been few significant changes in this document in the past eight to 10 years due to the fact that the task force that originally developed it worked very hard and because farmers are receptive to these practices. There is a very low number of repeat complaints. Annual review of this document keeps it current and useful. Dr. Hogberg reviewed the recommended changes in the document. He then discussed concerns for the future. Perhaps as farms get larger it will be necessary to consider an outcome-based approach that examines nutrient levels in the soil to ensure environmental integrity, appropriate technologies to maintain environmental integrity, and research to quantify odors for measurement purposes.

Commissioner Tatter remarked that the GAAMP has been very successful due in part to Dr. Hogberg's dynamic leadership and the questions he poses. Commissioner Tatter further requested that a page be added to the document listing the committee of people who worked on its development.

Commissioner Tatter moved that the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for Manure Management and Utilization document be accepted in its presented form. Commissioner Darling seconded with one addition, that the 800 spill response number be added to the cover (1-800-405-0101).

Dr. Hogberg commented that the agreement between MDA and DEQ and the service approach by Wayne and his staff are to be commended. Commissioner Stamp also expressed appreciation to MSU for the research done regarding nutrient and manure management. Producers know that those nutrients are valuable and better management adds to profit, as well as better use of what was once considered a waste product. As that product continues to increase in value, it may become a saleable product. Motion carried unanimously.

Director Wyant recognized Mr. Whitman for the letter received from the former director of the Department of Natural Resources commending him for his outstanding work. He further recognized the excellent partnership between MDA and MSU to cooperatively work together to solve problems.

Governor's Road Initiative

Director Wyant presented information to the public in attendance on the Governor's Road Initiative. He also introduced the Commissioners and explained their role as advisors to the Governor. Michigan is the second most diverse agriculture state in the nation, but in the Thumb agriculture is the number-one industry. To ensure that agriculture continues to

succeed, MDA takes a leadership role in food safety, promotes programs that support the family farm, and takes an active role in pollution prevention. We also take an active role in issues outside the responsibility of MDA and the Commission, because of the direct impact on agriculture. Two issues continue to surface: the deer damage problem and the condition of our roads. He went on to explain the Governor's road initiative by using the handout, "Build Michigan II: Repair, Reform, Responsibility." He then answered questions from the Commissioners and the audience. Information received at this meeting will be reported back to the Governor and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). MDOT will be conducting informational meetings throughout the state to explain the Governor's initiative, hear concerns, answer questions, and receive as much feedback as possible. Director Wyant expressed MDA's commitment to ensure that agriculture and the future of agriculture will be serviced by this plan.

Public Comment

The Chairperson opened the meeting to public comments and since there were none, Commissioner Tatter moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourn

Chairperson Veliquette adjourned the meeting at 10:05 a.m. The Commissioners then toured the Huron County Innovative Farming Project sponsored by MSU Extension.

Attachments

The following support documentation and handout materials are on file in the Commission of Agriculture office:

- Attachment A Commission Resolutions
- Attachment B Director's Report
- Attachment C Legislative Report
- Attachment D Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices
- Attachment E Build Michigan II: Repair, Reform, Responsibility
- Attachment F Project GREEN
- Attachment G Innovative Farmers of Michigan

I, Jordan B. Tatter, Secretary of the Michigan Commission of Agriculture, do hereby certify that I have read the minutes of the June 10-11, 1997, meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and they are a true and accurate description of the proceedings thereof.

Jordan B. Tatter, Secretary

I, Daniel J. Wyant, Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, do hereby certify that I have read the minutes of the June 10-11, 1997, meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and they are a true and accurate description of the proceedings thereof.

Daniel J. Wyant, Director

Approved on July 10, 1997

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